

NSLS USER ADMINISTRATION REPORT

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The User Administration Office not only deals first-hand with every user that comes through the NSLS' door, we also count them. Based on the numbers of users registering in our office, being trained, getting radiation badges, and attending the Annual Users' Meeting and Workshops, I am happy to say that the NSLS users' activities at the NSLS have been relatively steady and even increasing slightly. During FY 1996, in fact, there was a record number of 2261 new or returning users who came to the NSLS to perform research on a beamline! The statistics for the past four years are shown in the Table.

Fiscal Year	Users Coming to do Research	General User Proposals	User Meeting Attendance	Abstracts for Activity Rpt.	User Publications
1996	2261	446	368	476	567
1995	2206	428	322	480	641
1994	2228	435	(no mtg.-SRI)	414	562
1993	2193	420	328	506	666

Note that for publications and abstracts, the NSLS relies on the users to volunteer this information to the NSLS. Therefore the fluctuations in those columns are usually due to other factors besides actual facility usage e.g. how much time the NSLS invested that year in searching for and requesting the information, and how well the users responded that year. Unfortunately, these are both items which are scrutinized as indicators of a facility's productivity - the user community should be prepared for renewed efforts on the part of the NSLS to collect this important information. Some other interesting facts and analyses emerge from our yearly statistics:

- The NSLS still gets over half of its users from universities. Although there is some proprietary research being conducted where the institution is not required to publish or share the data, most of the research done at the NSLS is published in open literature where anyone who needs it can have access to it. Indeed, the data belongs to the people of the U.S. who fund the DOE facilities through tax dollars and the information is out there, available to be used in the next invention or new technology.
- Our users are young crowd - over 40% are 30 or under and another 33% are between 30 and 40 years old. It seems that a significant population of young scientists is being introduced to the capabilities and usefulness of synchrotrons, in many fields of science, at a point in their career where they have many years of research to look forward to.
- New York, California, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, in that order, are the states with the most institutions sending users to the NSLS. Illinois and Maryland are tied for fourth place. This illustrates that the NSLS not only has a strong regional customer base here in the East, but despite the SSRL and the Advanced Light Source in Berkeley there are users with special needs in California who still come to the NSLS. The pattern is likely to hold true for the Advanced Photon Source in Illinois - a good fraction of those Illinois users will probably continue to use the NSLS, at least in addition to the new APS.

- The industrial institutions with the largest numbers of NSLS users are also local: Dow Chemical Company, Exxon, IBM, and Lucent Technologies.
- Users in the field of structural biology have increased each year from 267 in 1993 (12%) to 518 in 1996 - now 23%, or almost a quarter of all NSLS users. The recently completed structural biology addition to the experimental floor is providing much-welcomed lab and set-up space for this growing community.

The User Administration Office meets the varied information needs of the NSLS by collecting information from users, compiling statistics like those above, and producing publications and pamphlets. Our other equally important mission is to support the NSLS user community by administering the General User Program, organizing and running the Annual Users' Meeting (more on that in Section 3 of this Activity Report), and helping the users get to their experiments as quickly as possible with efficient registration and training procedures.

The General User Program has seen some major changes this year. Up until recently, all the proposal information was being data-entered and stored in a large WordPerfect file. This worked well for a number of years but had its limitations. The system constrained the type and complexity of reports and statistics we could extract, allowed only one person to data-enter the proposals at one time (which therefor dictated our processing schedules), and precluded future development of electronic methods of submitting and storing proposals.

During FY 1996, a Proposal Database was designed and implemented by NSLS Administration programmer Liz Hicks, with the assistance of information systems consultant Peggy Sutherland (now with BNL's Business Information Systems division) and Eileen Pinkston (the General User Program Coordinator). The Proposal Database is actually part of the User Database in which everyone registers when they arrive, so that information such as user addresses can be shared instead of duplicated. The new database has enabled the User Administration Office to accommodate more complex requests for queries and reports; since more than one person can use the database at one time, it will allow us to shorten the proposal processing schedule and become more flexible in accepting different types of proposals in the future - again, without sacrificing turn-around time. Finally, the database opens the possibility for electronic submission us-



User Administration Group:
(front, left to right) Eileen Pinkston, Eva Rothman, and Nancy Wright
(back, left to right) Lydia Rogers and Linda Feierabend.

ing e-mail or the Web or some combination - this is because unlike the WordPerfect file, the database could link to or store the 1 to 3 page narratives attached to the proposal forms.

In May of 1996 Lydia Rogers joined the User Administration Office, beginning her stay here by helping to test the new Proposal Database. She and Eileen have already used the new Proposal Database for the May 31 and the September 30 submission deadlines. In addition, Lydia has taken a major role in the annual production of the Activity Report by taking charge of the abstract submissions.

New technology continues to positively impact the User Administration Office. Over the summer of 1996, the old Polaroid camera used for taking user ID badge photos was replaced by a digital camera attached to a PC. The software allows the User Administration Office to take the user's photo, choose the best image from a set of nine which the computer automatically generates with

various contrast settings, and then electronically send it in the correct format to the Safeguards and Security Division where the BNL ID badges are physically made. In the past, the Polaroid snapshots the User Administration Office took had to be delivered to Security and re-photographed and digitized for the Security Divisions photo database. This Polaroid database stored the images in a proprietary format, which means they could not be decoded and used for anything else. Now, besides resulting in a much better image quality, the new non-proprietary format allows them to be used with Human Resources personnel files, or at the BNL main gate or HFBR where guards could verify visitor ID with the computer screen. The NSLS for its part will be enhancing the electronic NSLS user and staff directory in the lobby to display everyone's photos - if a user needs to locate someone for assistance, they will know exactly for whom to look!

